

REMARKS

Claims 25-36 are rejected either under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Long (U.S. Pat. No. 4,805,366) or under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Long in view of Keith (U.S. Pat. No. 5,996,297). These grounds of rejection are respectfully traversed.

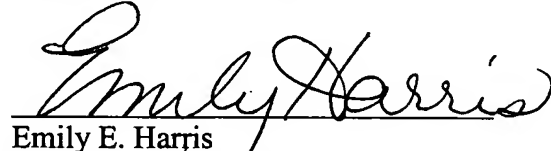
The examiner indicates that Long discloses connectors that are “laterally (linearly)” spaced apart (see office action, page 2) or “spaced away from each other by a liner, or lateral, line” (office action, page 4). Applicant respectfully disagrees with these statements. The examiner has defined “laterally” in an unconventional way that does not agree with the plain, ordinary meaning of the word (which is the way it is used in the specification). In the specification, the drawings clearly show the longitudinally extending portion of the connectors side by side. The specification, when describing the drawings (with the side by side portions), states “As seen in Figures 1 and 3...[t]hese longitudinally extended portions generally define flanges 26 that enhance the bending stiffness of the connector 10. The two flanges 26 are spaced laterally apart and are interconnected by a thinner central portion or web 28. Lateral does not mean linear, as used in the specification. Further, according to Webster’s Unabridged Third New International Dictionary, lateral means “of or relating to the side: situated on, directed toward, or coming from the side”; “lying at or extending toward the right or left side: lying away from the median axis of the body”. The conventional, plain meaning of “lateral” means to the side, not the examiner’s definition of linear. In Applicant’s invention, the longitudinally extending portions are on either side of the web (i.e., laterally spaced). The connectors in Long do not have **longitudinally extending portions** that are spaced side by side or **laterally**.

Applicant has added non-colinear to claim 25 and has added claims 37 and 38 to try to make the side by side positioning even clearer. As the Long reference does not have all of the claimed elements, in particular the side by side spacing of the longitudinally extending portions of the connectors, the 102(b) rejections must fail. Further, the combination of Long with Keith also does not demonstrate every claimed element. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the 102 and 103 rejections of the claims in view of these remarks and the added claims is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is respectfully urged to call the undersigned attorney at (515) 288-2500 to discuss the claims in an effort to reach a mutual agreement with respect to claim limitations in the present application which will be effective to define the patentable subject matter if the present claims are not deemed to be adequate for this purpose.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 2/6/07

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Emily Harris", written over a horizontal line.

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